

REMARKS

The Office Action of January 24, 2007 has been received and considered. Claims 1-33 are pending in the application. Claims 6 and 32 have been amended. Claim 27 has been canceled. Claims 1-5 and 7-21 are allowed. Claims 6, 22, 23, 27, 28, 32 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,112,370 to Blanchard et al. ("Blanchard"). Claim 31 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Blanchard in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,003,945 to Kojima ("Kojima"). Claims 24-26, 29 and 30 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Each of the Examiner's rejections is discussed below.

Section 102

Claims 6, 22, 23, 27, 28, 32 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Blanchard. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Blanchard discloses a seat assembly having a fixed connecting flange 24 and a mobile connecting flange 26. Four coupling levers 34A, B, C, D with toothed sectors engage a toothed sector 48 on a shoulder 50 of mobile flange 26.

Blanchard fails to disclose or make obvious a reclining vehicle seat hinge assembly with a first housing having a plurality of **radially extending guide surfaces**, a pair of primary pawls **slidable radially along one of the guide surfaces** with respect to the first housing, and a pair of secondary pawls **slidable radially along one of the guide surfaces** with respect to the first housing, as required by independent claims 6 and 32.

The coupling levers 34a-d of Blanchard do not slide radially along radially extending guide

surfaces with respect to fixed flange 24 or mobile flange 26. Fixed flange 24 and mobile flange 26 have a common axis X. Coupling levers 34a-d pivot about a pivot axis that is offset from, and parallel to, axis X. Specifically, at column 4, lines 30-35, Blanchard recites that a first end 36A of coupling levers 34a, b has a pivot P mounted to pivot in a pivot slot L. “The pin P and the slot L define a pivot axis of the coupling lever substantially parallel to the rotation axis X.” Coupling levers 34a-d simply **do not slide radially along radially extending guide surfaces** with respect to a first housing.

Accordingly, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

Section 103

Claim 31 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Blanchard in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,003,945 to Kojima. Kojima is recited as disclosing a cooperating washer. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kojima fails to overcome the deficiencies of Blanchard discussed above. Specifically, Kojima fails to disclose or make obvious a reclining vehicle seat hinge assembly with a first housing having a plurality of radially extending guide surfaces, a pair of primary pawls slidable radially along one of the guide surfaces with respect to the first housing, and a pair of secondary pawls slidable radially along one of the guide surfaces with respect to the first housing, as required by independent claim 6, from which claim 31 depends.

Accordingly, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

Allowable Claims

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-5 and 7-21 are in condition for

allowance.

Claims 24-26, 29 and 30 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Since claim 6, from which claims 24-26, 29 and 30 depend, is believed to be allowable, as discussed above, claims 24-26, 29 and 30 are believed to be allowable in their present form. Accordingly, the objection should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Pending claims 1-26 and 28-33 are believed to be in form for allowance, and an indication to that effect is respectfully requested at this time. Please apply any charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 19-0733.

Respectfully submitted,

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By

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